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THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF SACRED LITERATURE.

To many of the readers of the *BIBLICAL WORLD* no introduction to the plan and purpose of the *BIBLE STUDENTS' READING GUILD* is necessary. For the many others, however, who have not yet become members of this organization it seems wise at this time, in announcing the work of the coming year to state some general facts concerning the plan. The Guild was organized October 1, 1894, in answer to what seemed an important demand. Its purpose was to introduce to the general public a line of reading in connection with the Bible which would help them not only to gain an intelligent view of the Bible, but to satisfy themselves as to the views upon it held by the best standard writers. Because of the lack of time to devote to distinctly religious reading, and the necessity therefore for a brief course upon a definite subject, the plan of a four years' course covering four great biblical topics was adopted. These four subjects are The Life of Christ, the Founding of the Christian Church, the Foreshadowings of the Christ (Old Testament History and Prophecy), and Old Testament Literature.

It has been the aim of the Institute in the selection of books to bring the course within the smallest financial compass consistent with the best material, and to make it sufficiently brief to require not more than a half hour a day for nine months of the year (October to June).

The student is not left to master the contents of the required books for himself, but is given upon enrollment a direction sheet giving general suggestions for the reading of the year. At the beginning of each month a postal bulletin assigning the special reading for the following month and giving detailed instructions concerning it, is sent to each student.

Nothing in the nature of reports from the student is *required*, yet such reports are frequently sent voluntarily and are always welcomed. The student is at liberty to correspond freely with the Institute concerning any phase of his work. In this connection it will be of interest to repeat what has before been published concerning the variety of persons to whom this course of reading has appealed. Nothing shows more distinctly the widespread interest in an intelligent knowledge of the Bible and the necessity of a literature upon this subject as accessible and readable as in other lines of thought. Much literature of this sort is available and needs only to be recommended to be read.

The occupation of the members in order of numbers in the membership of 1894-5 were as follows: Housewives, ministers, teachers, clerks, merchants,

missionaries, stenographers, mechanics, physicians, college professors, secretaries, bookkeepers, librarians, factory superintendents, lawyers, editors, dress-makers, manufacturers, students, hospital nurse, chemist, artist.

The subject for the work of October 1896 to June 1897 will be The Fore-shadowings of the Christ. This will constitute a study of the Old Testament History and Prophecy from the special point of view of the growth of the Messianic idea and ideal. No book has been found distinctly and satisfactorily treating this subject in a manner sufficiently untechnical to be readable by the general public. The books will therefore cover the historical and prophetic material from a general standpoint, leaving the distinctly messianic idea of each period to be discussed in a monthly article in the *BIBLICAL WORLD*.

The books selected are as follows:

1. Syllabus of Scripture material giving under a topical outline the biblical passages to be read (Harper), 25 c.
2. The Doctrine of the Prophets (Kirkpatrick), \$1.50.
3. Blake's How to Read The Prophets. Part II, 90 c.; part III, \$1.25; part V, \$1.25.
- ¹4. The *BIBLICAL WORLD*, July 1896-7, \$1.50.
5. Map and Chart Pamphlet, 10 c.

The books may be purchased through the Institute at the prices named above. These are special prices to the members of the Guild, but students are at full liberty to obtain the books where it is most convenient for them.

To ministers one of the problems of the times is how he may keep his people in touch with current religious thought in order that he may always give them his own best thought and can rely upon their appreciation of it. Can this be done through the pulpit alone? May it not be more easily and effectively done by means of some such expedient as this reading course? A Chapter of the Guild in any congregation will raise the tone of the whole congregation by making a nucleus of well informed hearers who will intelligently discuss these matters among themselves and with the pastor.

Since the last issue of this periodical the following Summer Schools have been added to our list: The Midland Chautauqua Assembly at Des Moines, Ia.; the Winfield (Kansas) Assembly, where Dr. H. L. Willett will offer instruction; the National Sunday School Teachers' Seminary at the South-western Baptist University, Jackson, Tenn., where Dr. Theodore G. Soares will represent the Institute work; and the Summer School of Theology at Saratoga Springs, N. Y., where Rev. Harlan Creelman of Yale will conduct classes in Hebrew and the English Bible. This brings the list to fifteen different schools, an increase over any previous year. It is possible that still others may be arranged for.

¹ The June number of the *BIBLICAL WORLD*, the special archæological number is given free to all new subscribers beginning with July 1896.